



Funerary Urn

Date

ca. 600-800

Primary Maker

Zapotec

Medium

pottery

Description

The bat is one of the most important animal deities of the Zapotec pantheon and this urn is also connected to Piquite Ziña, although in this example it is more likely a priest of the bat god wearing an elaborate costume. On this jar the bat is shown with an open mouth and projecting tongue, perhaps mimicking the way bats open their mouths during flight to echolocate. The ears are large and erect, and he wears a chest pendant and loincloth, or maxlatl, two elements which serve to anthropomorphize the figure. The frontal position and the

menacing gesture of palms and claws are also common conventions in the portrayal of the bat god. Throughout ancient Mesoamerica, the bat was linked to cave rituals and was seen as a deity related to the entrance of the Underworld. Its relevance is especially visible at the site of Monte Albán in modern Oaxaca, where numerous images of bats have been found in ceramic tomb offerings and carved in stone architecture. In the Popol Vuh, the Quiché Maya creation story, the House of Bats was one of the stages on the way to Xibalba, the underworld realm.

Dimensions

Overall: 8 1/8 x 5 3/8 x 4 in. (20.6 x 13.7 x 10.2 cm)